

# WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW



## CHILD ABUSE?

The term “child abuse” refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on

**Abuse may take place anywhere and may occur within the child's home or by someone known to the child.**

A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse:

**Physical abuse** may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It may include

- beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon
- holding a child under water
- dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.

**Female genital mutilation is another form of physical abuse**

**Sexual abuse/exploitation** involves using a child for sexual purposes.

Examples include;

- fondling, inviting a child to touch or be touched sexually,
- intercourse, rape, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, or
- involving a child in prostitution or pornography

**Neglect** is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. It includes;

- failing to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm.
- failing to provide a child with love, safety, and a sense of worth.

**An abuser may use a number of different tactics to gain access to a child, exert power and control over them, and prevent them from telling anyone about the abuse or seeking support.**

**Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self. It may include;

- verbal threats, intimidation, exploitation, or routinely making unreasonable demands
- social isolation, or
- terrorizing a child, or exposing them to family violence

**The abuse may happen once, or in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.**

## How to prevent Child Abuse:

**Education** involves providing children with knowledge about their rights, and teaching them the skills to identify abuse, ask for help, and avoid being re-victimized.

**Enhancing the awareness and skills** of judges, Crown prosecutors, defense lawyers, police, health care workers, social workers, psychologists, and teachers about child abuse

**Support** for children and families who have experienced abuse, or who are at risk

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